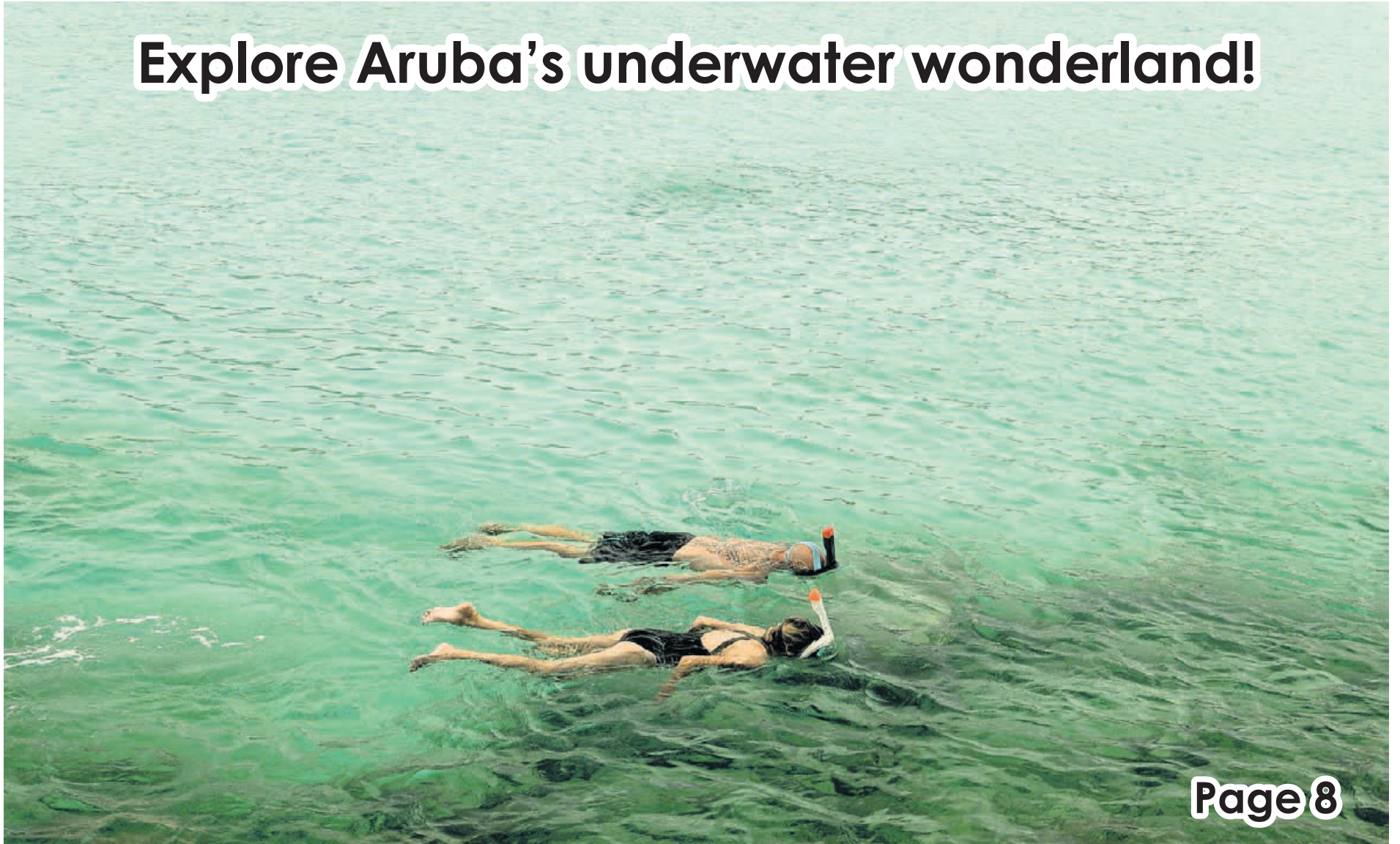




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Defense Department says military newspaper Stars and Stripes must eliminate 'woke distractions'

By **DAVID BAUDER**
AP Media Writer

The Pentagon said Thursday that it is changing the independent military newspaper Stars and Stripes so it concentrates on "reporting for our warfighters" and no longer includes "woke distractions."

That message, in a social media post from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's spokesman, is short on specifics and does not mention the news outlet's legacy of independence from government and military leadership. It comes a day after The Washington Post reported that applicants for jobs at Stars and Stripes were being asked what they would do to support



U.S. soldier Sgt. John Hubbuch of Versailles, Ky., one of the members of NATO led-peacekeeping forces in Bosnia reads Stars and Stripes newspaper on Sunday Feb. 14, 1999.

Associated Press

and Stripes to its original mission: reporting for our warfighters." He said the department will "refocus its content away from woke distractions."

"Stars and Stripes will be custom tailored to our warfighters," Parnell wrote. "It will focus on warfighting, weapons systems, fitness, lethality, survivability and ALL THINGS MILITARY. No more repurposed DC gossip columns; no more Associated Press reprints."

He said the department is committed to ensuring the outlet's legacy of reporting news that's important to service members.

Stars and Stripes' publisher, Max Lederer, did not immediately reply to a message seeking comment. But Jacqueline Smith, the outlet's ombudsman, called Parnell's statement a surprise. She said Stars and Stripes reports on matters important to service members and their families not just weapons systems or war strategy and she's detected nothing "woke" about its reporting.

"I think it's very important that Stars and Stripes maintains its editorial independence, which is the basis of its credibility," Smith said. A longtime newspaper editor in Connecticut, Smith serves in a role created by Congress three decades ago to ensure that independence, and she reports to the House Armed Services Committee.

It's the latest move by the Trump administration to impose restrictions on journalists. Most reporters from legacy news outlets have left the Pentagon rather than to agree to new rules imposed by Hegseth that they feel would give him too much control over what they report and write. The New York Times has sued to overturn the regulations. Trump has also sought to shut down government-funded outlets like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that report independent news about the world in countries overseas. □

President Donald Trump's policies. Stars and Stripes traces its lineage to the Civil War and has reported news about the military either in its newspaper or online since World War II, largely to an audience of service members stationed overseas. Roughly half of its budget comes from the Pentagon and its staff members are considered Defense Department employees. The outlet's mission statement emphasizes that it is "editorially independent of interference from outside its own editorial chain-of-command" and that it is unique among news organizations tied to the Defense Department in being "governed by the principles of the First Amendment."

Congress established that independence in the 1990s after instances of military leadership getting involved in editorial decisions. During Trump's first term in 2020, Defense Secretary Mark Esper tried to eliminate government funding for Stars and Stripes to effectively shut it down before he was overruled by the president.

Call for newspaper to be 'custom tailored to our warfighters'

Hegseth's spokesman, Sean Parnell, said on X Thursday that the Pentagon "is returning Stars

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U.S. seizes sixth sanctioned tanker it says has ties to Venezuela in Trump's effort to control its oil

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN
and MICHAEL BIESECKER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. forces in the Caribbean Sea have seized another sanctioned oil tanker that the Trump administration says has ties to Venezuela, part of a broader U.S. effort to take control of the South American country's oil. The U.S. Coast Guard boarded the tanker, named Veronica, early Thursday, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem wrote on social media. The ship had previously passed through Venezuelan waters and was operating in defiance of President Donald Trump's "established quarantine of sanctioned vessels in the Caribbean," she said.

U.S. Southern Command said Marines and sailors launched from the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford to take part in the operation alongside a Coast Guard tactical team, which Noem said conducted the boarding as in previous raids. The military said the ship was seized "without incident."



Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem speaks with reporters at the White House, Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026, in Washington.

Several U.S. government social media accounts posted brief videos that appeared to show various parts of the ship's capture. Black-and-white footage showed at least four helicopters approaching the ship before hovering over the deck while armed troops dropped down by

rope. At least nine people could be seen on the deck of the ship.

The Veronica is the sixth sanctioned tanker seized by U.S. forces as part of the effort by Trump's administration to control the production, refining and global distribution of Venezuela's oil products and the fourth

since the U.S. ouster of Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro in a surprise nighttime raid almost two weeks ago.

The Veronica last transmitted its location on Jan. 3 as being at anchor off the coast of Aruba, just north of Venezuela's main oil terminal. According to the data

it transmitted at the time, the ship was partially filled with crude.

Days later, the Veronica became one of at least 16 tankers that left the Venezuelan coast in contravention of the quarantine that U.S. forces have set up to block sanctioned ships, according to Samir Madani, the co-founder of TankerTrackers.com. He said his organization used satellite imagery and surface-level photos to document the ship movements.

The ship is currently listed as flying the flag of Guyana and is considered part of the shadow fleet that moves cargoes of oil in violation of U.S. sanctions.

According to its registration data, the ship also has been known as the Galileo, owned and managed by a company in Russia. In addition, a tanker with the same registration number previously sailed under the name Pegas and was sanctioned by the Treasury Department for being associated with a Russian company moving cargoes of illicit oil. □

Associated Press

Final day to select ACA health plans arrives in most states, with no subsidy deal yet

By ALI SWENSON
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Thursday was the final day to select an Affordable Care Act health insurance plan across much of the country, as the expiration of federal subsidies drives up health costs and lawmakers remain locked in a debate over how to address the issue.

That's when the open enrollment window ends in most states for plans that start in February. About 10 states that run their own marketplaces have later deadlines, or have extended them to the end of the month to give their residents more time.

The date is a crucial one for millions of small business owners, gig workers, farmers, ranchers and others who don't get their

health insurance from a job and therefore rely on marketplace plans. A record 24 million Americans purchased Affordable Care Act health plans last year. But this year, their decisions over health coverage have been more difficult than usual as clarity over how much it will cost is hard to come by. And so far, enrollment is lagging behind last year's numbers with about 22.8 million Americans having signed up so far, according to federal data.

Last year, for months, it was unclear whether Congress would allow for the end-of-year expiration of COVID-era expanded subsidies that had offset costs for more than 90% of enrollees. Democrats forced a record-long government shutdown over the issue, but still couldn't get a deal

done. So the subsidies expired Jan. 1, leaving the average subsidized enrollee with more than double the monthly premium costs for 2026, according to an analysis from the health care nonprofit KFF.

Still, the question of whether Congress would resurrect the tax credits loomed over Washington. Several enrollees told The Associated Press they have either delayed signing up for coverage or signed up with a plan to cancel as they anxiously watch what's happening on Capitol Hill.

Last week, the House passed a three-year extension of the subsidies after 17 Republicans joined with Democrats against the wishes of Republican leaders. But the Senate rejected a similar bill last year.

Sen. Bernie Moreno, R-Ohio,

has been leading a bipartisan group of 12 senators trying to devise a compromise and said this week that he expects to have a proposal by the end of the month. The contours of the senators' bipartisan plan involves a two-year deal that would extend the

enhanced subsidies while adding new limits on who can receive them. The proposal would also create the option, in the second year, of a new health savings account that President Donald Trump and Republicans prefer. □



Pages from the U.S. Affordable Care Act health insurance website healthcare.gov are seen on a computer screen in New York, Aug. 19, 2025.

Associated Press

Prosecutor urges manslaughter verdict for guard who 'did nothing' as fellow officers killed inmate

By **MICHAEL HILL**
Associated Press

UTICA, N.Y. (AP) — A New York prison guard who failed to intervene as he watched an inmate being beaten to death should be convicted of manslaughter, a prosecutor told a jury Thursday in the final trial of correctional officers whose pummeling, recorded by body-cameras, provoked outrage.

"For seven minutes — seven gut-churning, nauseating, disgusting minutes — he stood in that room close enough to touch him and he did nothing," special prosecutor William Fitzpatrick told jurors during closing arguments. The jury began deliberating Thursday afternoon.

Former corrections officer Michael Fisher, 55, is charged with second-degree manslaughter in the death of Robert Brooks, who was beaten by guards upon his arrival at Marcy Correctional Facility on the night of Dec. 9, 2024, his agony recorded silently on the guards' body cameras. Fisher's attorney, Scott Iseman, said his client entered the infirmary after the beating began and could not have known the extent of



This image provided by the New York State Attorney General office shows body camera footage of correction officers beating a handcuffed man, Robert Brooks, at the Marcy Correctional Facility in Oneida County, N.Y., Dec. 9, 2024.

his injuries.

Fisher was among 10 guards indicted in February. Three more agreed to plead guilty to reduced charges in return for cooperating with prosecutors. Of the 10 officers indicted in February, six pleaded guilty to manslaughter or lesser charges. Four rejected plea deals. One was convicted of murder, and two were acquitted in the first trial last fall.

Fisher, standing alone, is the last of the guards to

face a jury.

The trial closes a chapter in a high-profile case led to reforms in New York's prisons. But advocates say the prisons remain plagued by understaffing and other problems, especially since a wildcat strike by guards last year.

Officials took action amid outrage over the images of the guards beating the 43-year-old Black man in the prison's infirmary. Officers could be seen striking Brooks in the chest with a

shoe, lifting him by the neck and dropping him.

Video shown to the jury during closing arguments Thursday indicates Fisher stood by the doorway and didn't intervene.

"Did Michael Fisher recklessly cause the death of Robert Brooks? Of course he did. Not by himself. He had plenty of other helpers," said Fitzpatrick, the Onondaga County district attorney.

Iseman asked jurors looking at the footage to consider

what Fisher could have known at the time "without the benefit of 2020 hindsight."

"Michael Fisher did not have a rewind button. He did not have the ability to enhance. He did not have the ability to pause. He did not have the ability to get a different perspective of what was happening in the room," Iseman said.

Even before Brooks' death, critics claimed the prison system was beset by problems that included brutality, overworked staff and inconsistent services. By the time criminal indictments were unsealed in February, the system was reeling from an illegal three-week wildcat strike by corrections officers who were upset over working conditions. Gov. Kathy Hochul deployed National Guard troops to maintain operations. More than 2,000 guards were fired.

Prison deaths during the strike included Messiah Nantwi on March 1 at Mid-State Correctional Facility, which is across the road from the Marcy prison. 10 other guards were indicted in Nantwi's death in April, including two charged with murder. □

Postal Service unveils new Muhammad Ali stamp in champ's hometown

By **DYLAN LOVAN**
Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Postal officials unveiled a commemorative stamp of boxing legend Muhammad Ali in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, on Thursday, featuring a photo of the champ in his fighting prime.

The Postal Service printed 22 million of the Ali stamps, which feature an Associated Press photo from 1974 showing the fighter holding up his gloves in a fighting stance. His last name, in bold black and red all-cap lettering, accents the stamp.

"We honor Muhammad Ali here in his hometown, a city that shaped him and

that he reshaped forever," said longtime broadcaster Bob Costas, who hosted the unveiling event. The champ's friends and family gathered to celebrate the issuance of the stamp, which went on sale Thursday.

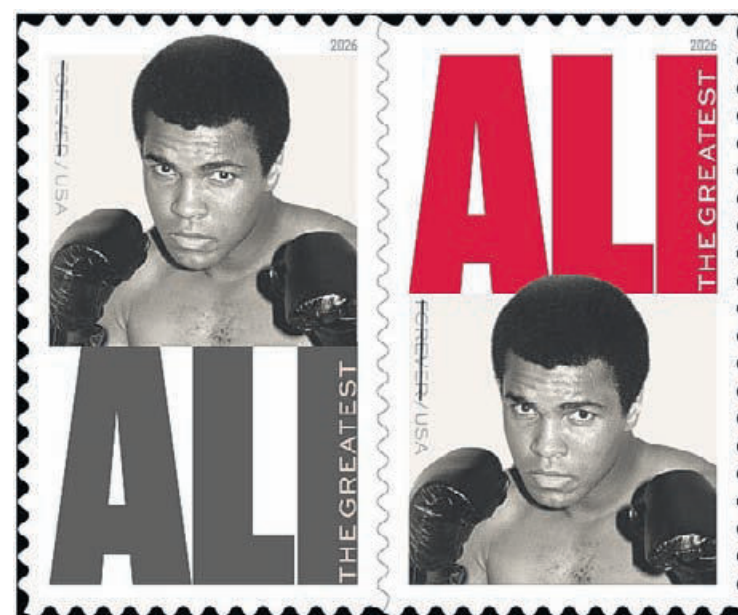
"This stamp will travel millions of miles, it will pass through countless hands, but it will quietly remind the world of a man who dared to believe that kindness could be powerful and that being in service to others could be heroic," said his widow, Lonnie Ali.

The outspoken three-time heavyweight champ mesmerized the world with his brash poetry and personality.

He stayed in the spotlight in his post-fighting days by continuing his philanthropy and support of human rights issues. In his boxing days, Ali once quipped that he should be on a postage stamp because "that's the only way I'll ever get licked."

The Forever Stamps come with a stamp sheet that also features a photo of Ali posing in a pinstripe suit, a recognition of his work as an activist and humanitarian.

Born Cassius Clay Jr., Ali, who changed his name after converting to Islam, died in 2016 at the age of 74 after living with Parkinson's disease for more than three decades. He is buried



This image released by the United States Postal Service shows a commemorative Muhammad Ali stamp featuring a 1974 Associated Press photo of Ali.

Associated Press

in Louisville. During his lifetime and posthumously, the man known as The Greatest has received numerous awards, including an Olympic gold

medal in 1960, the United Nations Messenger of Peace award in 1998, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005. □

UK's Conservative Party leader torpedoed defection of chief rival by firing him first



Robert Jenrick speaking at a Reform UK press conference in Westminster, London, where it was announced the former Conservative MP has joined Reform UK, Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026.

Associated Press

By PAN PYLAS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Conservative Party, which governed the country from 2010 until it suffered its worst-ever electoral defeat two years ago, was plunged into fresh turmoil Thursday after its leader sacked the man widely seen as her greatest rival for apparently plotting to

defect from the party. He then defected.

Robert Jenrick, the Conservative Party's justice spokesperson, confirmed his defection at a subsequent press briefing of Reform UK, the upstart hard-right party led by Nigel Farage.

Jenrick said the Conservative Party had "betrayed its voters and members" and

was "in denial, or being dishonest" about what it had done on an array of issues, including the economy and immigration.

"After the election, I hoped the Conservative Party would change, reckon with our mistakes with humility, repent," he said. "I said this after the election, fought for it, hoped it would be possible. But over the last

year, I've realized this was naive. It hasn't happened." Jenrick joins a string of Conservative politicians, many of whom lost their seats at the July 2024 general election, to have made the move to Reform UK, a party that has put clamping down on immigration at the heart of its agenda for government.

Reform lifeboat

Critics, including Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer, argue that Reform UK is becoming a lifeboat for failed Conservative politicians who have concluded they have no future in the party. Starmer refers to the Conservative Party as a "sinking ship."

Though Reform UK only has a handful of lawmakers in the House of Commons, it is leading both the governing Labour Party and the Conservatives in opinion polls ahead of a raft of elections on May 7, including for the parliaments in Scotland and Wales.

Farage said the door to further Conservative defections was open but would close on that election day, Britain's equivalent to the U.S. midterms.

The right is split

A day of high drama on the right of British politics started when Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch said she sacked Jenrick due to "irrefutable evidence that he was plotting in secret to defect" in a way that was "designed to be as damaging as possible" to the party.

Badenoch will be hoping her abrupt and straightforward sacking of Jenrick will help bolster her position as the leader of the Conservative Party, often referred to as the Tory Party, and regain supporters lost to Reform UK. She added that Farage won't find it easy keeping Jenrick onside.

"All I would say to Nigel is, Rob's not my problem anymore," she said. "He's your problem."

The Conservative Party is no stranger to turmoil, having gone through six leaders in 10 years, five of them serving as prime minister. Widespread anger at the way the Conservatives were governing Britain led to their heavy election defeat in 2024, their worst since the modern party was created nearly 200 years ago. □

Venezuela's new leader faces competing pressures from the US and a government loyal to Maduro

By REGINA GARCIA CANO
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez is set Thursday to deliver her first state of the union speech, addressing an anxious country as she navigates competing pressures from the United States — which toppled her predecessor less than two weeks ago — and a government loyal to former President Nicolás Maduro.

The speech comes one day after Rodríguez said her government would continue releasing prisoners detained under Maduro in what she described as "a new political moment" since his ouster by the United

States earlier this month. In her address to the National Assembly, which is controlled by the country's ruling party, Rodríguez is expected to explain her vision for her government, including potential changes to the state-owned oil industry that U.S. President Donald Trump has promised to reinvigorate since Maduro's seizure.

On Thursday, Trump was set to meet at the White House with Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, whose political party is widely considered to have won 2024 elections rejected by Maduro. But in endorsing Rodríguez, who served as Maduro's vice president

since 2018, Trump has sidelined Machado.

After acknowledging a Tuesday call with Trump, Rodríguez said on state

television that her government would use "every dollar" earned from oil sales to overhaul the nation's public health care



Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez makes a statement to the press at Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026.

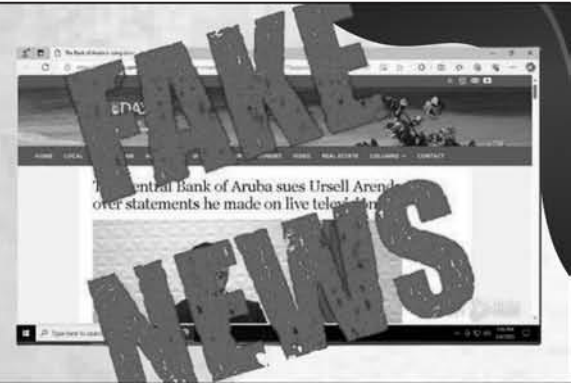
Associated Press

system. Hospitals and other health care facilities across the country have long been crumbling, and patients are asked to provide practically all supplies needed for their care, from syringes to surgical screws. The acting president must walk a tightrope, balancing pressures from both Washington and top Venezuelan officials who hold sway over Venezuela's security forces and strongly oppose the U.S. Her recent public speeches reflect those tensions vacillating from conciliatory calls for cooperation with the U.S., to defiant rants echoing the anti-imperialist rhetoric of her toppled predecessor. □

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Myanmar's military government claims a record seizure of illicit drugs at production sites

BANGKOK (AP) — The military government of Myanmar, long noted as one of the world's biggest producers of heroin and methamphetamine, has announced what it describes as the country's largest-ever seizures of illicit drugs and equipment used to produce them, state media reported Thursday. The seizures were the result of a large-scale operation carried out on Jan. 8-12 targeting drug production and online scam centers in northern Shan state, state-run newspapers including Myanma Alinn reported. The newspaper reports cited Home Affairs Minister Lt. Gen. Tun Tun Naung as saying at a Wednesday news conference that drugs and equipment were seized when three major drug manufacturing facilities in Mongyai township, each just a few kilometers (miles) apart, were raided on Jan. 10-11. Mongyai is located about 200 kilometers (125 miles) northeast of Mandalay, the country's second-largest



In this photo provided by Myanmar Military True News Information Team on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2026, a police officer speaks to diplomats and journalists at drug seizure site near Mongyai township, Shan State, Myanmar.

city. Tun Tun Naung said at a news conference that the three sites had produced heroin, methamphetamine and crystal methamphetamine, better known as "ice." Photos released by the mili-

tary showed large facilities with dozens of blue plastic barrels filled with powdery substances, gas cylinders, large mixing vats and glass flasks linked by tubing in makeshift structures that the report said were used in drug production.

"The currently seized drug manufacturing bases are the largest-ever drug production sites in our country's drug history," he was quoted saying. Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, the military government's spokesperson, was re-

Associated Press

ported to have said at the same news conference that the three sites might be the country's main drug-production hubs. He said drug trafficking routes from that region ran to neighboring countries including Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia, and through conflict areas, particularly in west, north-west and southeast parts of Myanmar, with the involvement of ethnic armed groups and local armed resistance groups fighting the army. State broadcaster MRTV reported Thursday evening that security forces raided a fourth narcotics production site located a few kilometers (miles) from the other three. Myanmar's drug trade, carried out mainly in remote frontier areas, has long been attributed to various ethnic minority groups to fund their armed struggles for more autonomy. Members of the army, especially at the regional level, have also been accused of involvement. □

Israel to honor Charlie Kirk with award for fighting antisemitism



Turning Point USA Founder Charlie Kirk speaks at a Turning Point event prior to Republican vice presidential nominee Sen. JD Vance, R-Ohio, speaking, Sept. 4, 2024, in Mesa, Ariz. Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel will honor the late Charlie Kirk for his work combating antisemitism at a conference in late January, four months after the conservative activist was assassinated while speaking at an American university. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Wednesday evening that Kirk will be given an award at the International Conference on Combating Antisemitism in Jerusalem. Several pro-Israeli leaders are expected to attend the event, among them Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and former Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. This year will be the second time Israel's government hosts the conference, which it says is "dedicated to confronting antisemitism and Holocaust denial in today's world." Kirk was a staunch supporter of Israel. After his death, Netanyahu described him as a "lion-hearted friend" of the country and a "defender of our common Judeo-Christian civilization." The Turning Point USA co-founder frequently invoked scripture and prophecy to urge American Christians and conservatives to stand by the country against its enemies. But some of his comments about Jewish philanthropy and Hollywood drew accusations of antisemitism. And as debates over Israel have emerged among American conservatives, his legacy on the issue has become contested. Last year, speaking on The Megyn Kelly Show, he said support for Israel had become so rigid that he felt unable to voice even mild criticism of its policies. □

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin



(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today loves to share parts of the Aruban culture with our readers, diving into (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this article, we'll look at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is 'placa'. Cents are called 'cen' (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For ex-



ample, a 5-cent coin was once called 'Dos Placa'; 10-cent coins were called 'Debchi'; 25-cent coins were called 'Diez Placa' and the 50-cent coin was once called 'Yotin' (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on

the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Tortuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria



with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and

the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

The word "florin" is supposedly named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies.

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba (BNA).

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Aruba's underwater wonderland

(Oranjestad)—Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating underwater spots you can explore. So take your snorkeling gear and visit some of these top places for underwater exploration.

Tres Trapi

'Tres Trapi' means three steps in Papiamentu. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by a tiny stairway carved into the rocky coastline. Tres Trapi is a small beach, located on the north-western side of the island, an approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you walk right into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While you're snorkeling, you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean Sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles. Respect the animals, keep your distance and just enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its port-side in Malmok bay, and the sunken WWII ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive

spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach is a lagoon with crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Further in the lagoon, you'll find a lot of people snorkeling. This is an excellent spot to go under water exploring—but do take care not to go too far out; outside the lagoon the waves can be pretty rough! In the lagoon there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. The main entrance to reach the beach is through a small bridge that takes you through the mangrove trees. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, accompanied with wooden stairs built to allow easy access to the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you'll find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is snorkel heaven. □



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Birds of Aruba: Soaring through the blue skies

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's nature is very diverse and is home to several beautiful and majestic wildlife. Among these is the bright Trupial, whose angelic voice is always heard with the rising sun; the cuddly parakeet, always in company of another, and the majestic Warawara, a mighty bird that can be seen soaring in the clear blue skies.

Trupial



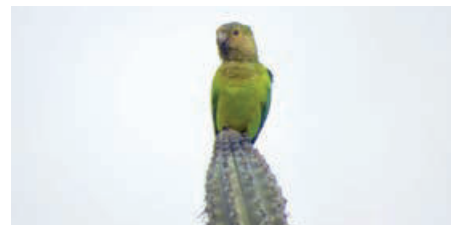
Icterus icterus, or known locally as the Venezuelan or Orange Troupial, is a striking songbird whose bright orange feathers can be spotted from a far distance. Known to be the first

bird to sing at the first sign of sunrise, this beloved songbird likes to wake up with a tune. But don't let their angelic songs fool you; the Trupial can be a bit aggressive towards any threat, protective over their nesting spots—nesting spots they most likely stole from other birds. Trupials can be seen regularly, often in trees or on top of a cactus.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Prikichi (parakeet)

The Brown-throated Prikichi (Aratinga pertinax) became the national bird of Aruba back in 2015, at the request of Aruba Birdlife Conservation. The bright green, adorable parakeet usually flies in flock of 30 or more, but its population has been declining since the 2010s. Prikichis are a shier breed than the trupial, often flying away at the sign of any threat. They use termite nests for breeding spots



and feed mostly on seeds from the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi tree and fruits.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Warawara

The Warawara or Caracara is one of the biggest birds found in the Aruban mondi. At a height of 41 to 60 cm, their wingspan can measure up to 125 cm. Known as the "garbage man", this bird of prey mostly feeds on dead animals. Its coat is dark brown, with a cream-colored neck, orange face, thick beak and long legs. The Warawara prefers to build its nest in the middle of tall cacti and produces a rattling, screaming



sound, throwing its head back onto its back while calling.

While these birds are a beautiful sight to behold, it is very important to keep your distance and respect their habitats. This is how we protect our wildlife. By admiring the beauty of Aruba in a safe and respectful manner, we can do our part in protecting our sacred nature.

Photo Credit: Aruba Birdlife Conservation

Memories of the island

Richard Jensen celebrates 50 years coming to Aruba!

(Oranjestad)—Recently, we received a lovely message from a reader who shared some of his beautiful memories on the island. Mr. Richard Jensen shares

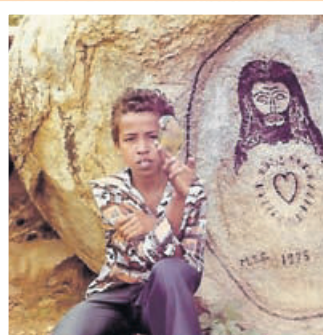
his story as a long-time visitor with pictures he took throughout the decades.

As Richard told us, January 9th marked 50 years since his first visit to Aruba. Since then, he's been coming back every year for the past 10+ years, and is once again paying a visit this month. Some pictures

he shared with us shows us a bit of the old Aruba, allowing us to reminisce the things we no longer have, and appreciate the beauty of what makes Aruba so special.

Thank you Richard for sharing your fondest memories of the island with us!

If you have any memories you'd like to share, shoot us an e-mail and we would love to give you a small shout-out. Aruba is special for both locals and visitors, and we want to cherish those small moments that made this island paradise for you! ☐



Know more about the Town Hall Eloy Arends building

The Monuments bureau shares some essential facts about the Town Hall known as the Eloy Arends building. The aim is to educate the community about the mansion's construction, history, and preservation.

The Doctor Eloy Arends building is located at the Wilhelminastraat 8 and was the home of the Arends family. It was the first building that the Monuments bureau, and the Government of Aruba, restored in 1997. Mr. Medardo 'Dada' Picus, was the architect of this Aruban-Caribbean building. The building sits on a 1.545 m² plot of land and is a typical Aruban mansion. It is an open home with false walls that allow the connection of the rooms with each other.

The entrance has large doors and columns supporting the floor of the upper balcony. In between the columns, there are decoration details made out of wood. The elaborately detailed embellishment is known as gingerbread trim and the triangular decora-



tive wall surface over the columns is called the tympanum.

The top of the doors and windows have stained glass.

The building is not built on ground level but at approximately 1.5 meters above

ground level. This mansion elevation created storage below the wooden floors and allowed proper ventilation.

The building has lots of windows which allow plenty of light inside, as well as good ventilation.

It has dormer windows and crowns on the outside part of the roof and different decorations on the edges of the walls and facade.

This is a stunning building full of beautiful details that resemble its beauty and trans-

form into a history of love. Aruban tradition for "well-to-do" families dictates that before a man gets married, he has to present his future wife with a newly built and fully furnished house. It was certainly the case with this building.

Due to the engagement between Eloy Arends and Monica Lacle (daughter of Adriaan Lacle, who is mainly known for the boulevard that bears his name), the construction of the mansion began in 1922 and was completed in 1925 when the couple got married.

The Office of the Civil Registry is located in the adjacent building, whereas the mansion hall is used exclusively for civil wedding ceremonies.

The Monuments bureau will continue to contribute and educate the community about the history of our monuments with significant value for Aruba. □

Place names in San Nicolas and their origins

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever taking a tour of Aruba, San Nicolas would definitely be on your itinerary. From relaxing on the white, sandy beaches of Baby and Roger's Beach, to exploring the prehistoric caves of Quadirikiri and Fonteijn, you are taking in a full view of what San Nicolas has to offer. But did you know that you are also passing through areas whose names have historical origins? Here are a few place names in San Nicolas and their origin story.

Sero Colorado

On your way to Baby or Roger's Beach, you'll pass by the famous Red Anchor at what was once the entrance to the Colony residential community and be greeted with red soiled hills by the coast. This is Sero Colorado. Named after the 30-meter, deep red, limestone hill, "Sero Colorado" translates to "Colored Hill". Sero Colorado has deep historical ties with the once-thriving phosphate industry in the area. Matter of fact, there are still underground shafts and passages deep in Sero Colorado from the time of phosphate mining. In 1958, the refinery at the time, Lago, adopted



this name for the residential section of its employees.

Vader Piet

Another well visited area, Vader Piet is located in the Arikok National Park. Recognizable sites within this area include the Wind Mills and the Quadirikiri Cave. The origin of this name is part historical and speculation, as there are slight deviations from what actually happened.

In 1829, Pieter Lampe was a planter and the person responsible for governing this remote area. As the

story goes, Pieter was well known and beloved for his kindness and good treatment of his employees, and was therefore also called Vader Piet (Father Piet). However, he was tragically murdered—some speculate at the hands of a slave. For his work and good heart, the area was named after him.

San Nicolas

Of course we can't forget San Nicolas itself. Much like Vader Piet, the origin of the name San Nicolas has so far two different accounts. In the literal sense, "San Nicolas" translates to "Saint Nicolas", lead-

ing many to believe that this district was named after a Spanish saint. Though one account does support this with the theory that the district was named after the saint by Spanish colonizers, the other account is much less divine, but does refer to an influential figure in the area.

Nicolaas van der Biest was a successful landowner during the time of the phosphate boom in late 19th century Aruba. Back then, landowners (most, if not all of them men) were referred to as "Shon" by their subordinates. So, the district was originally named after Shon Nicolaas. Over time, the name evolved into what is now San Nicolas. □

Source: "Aruba: Short History" by Dr. J. Hartog.



The Lionfish and its threat to our marine wild life

(Oranjestad)—Despite its colorful and striking appearance, the lionfish has become a Caribbean-wide problem for Atlantic sea life. The Aruban marine wild life is also affected by this beautiful dilemma, as it is foreign to our waters and has become a danger to our local fish and reefs.

Originating from the Indo-Pacific Ocean, the lionfish is a relatively small fish. It has no teeth, but it does

protect itself against predators using its sharp, colorful spikes. It is said that the sting of a lionfish can be up to 100 times more painful than that of a bee's sting.

Its natural predators in the Indo-Pacific are sharks and barracudas, but in the Caribbean Sea, local fish do not recognize the lionfish as part of their diet. In other words, the lionfish has no predators in the Caribbean Sea. And this becomes a

major problem for our local marine life; if there are no predators to stimulate population control of lionfish, these fish can continue to reproduce and expand to other parts of the Atlantic, become more invasive and dangerous for other types of fish.

For Aruba, the lionfish is a problem especially for our local coral reefs. According to Patrick van Brakel, lionfish expert and hunter from the Hunting Lionfish Aruba foundation, every reef has a "cleaning station"—tiny fish that eat algae and other types of waste on a reef, thus maintaining the reef's health and providing food to the fish population in the area. However, as the lionfish feeds off of these tiny fish, it becomes harder for the coral reef to maintain its health.

Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlantic happened in Florida, where people would buy li-



onfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish were too much upkeep, they were let out into the ocean to roam free. From continental USA, the lionfish travelled to and invaded the entire Caribbean area, from Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao up to New York. In Aruba, lionfish were discovered in 2009.

Controlling the lionfish population is challenge, as each female fish can lay up to 40,000 eggs a day. Lucki-

ly, we have people like van Brakel who dedicate their lives hunting and capturing these invasive species, using them for consumption and jewelry making.

They are caught with a hand spear, an object resembling a garbage picker with 4 sharp prongs. These spears are used like a sling shot to catch lionfish from a distance. These fish are then put into a collecting tube and taken out of the water. This way, he does his part in protecting the local wild life. □



The Aruban way of life: Creating community with Cas di Torto

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban people understand that a happy life is spent in great ambience with your loved ones. Passed down from one generation to the other, building community has been a key aspect in forging our traditions and customs. The Cas di Torto (mud house) played a big role in cultivating community, bridging families together and forming close bonds with your neighbors—something we highly value today.

Cas di Torto: History and construction

The origin of the Cas di Torto is said to date back to the early 19th century in the Paraguana Peninsula in Venezuela. Refugees who sought sanctuary on Aruba introduced this building method to the island.

The uprights of the walls were made with sturdy and straight wayaca or kwihi wood, or from thin mangrove struts. Then, the wattle walls were weaved in using branches and twigs from the warero and sisal plant, daubed with a mixture of grass and mud. Finally, the walls got a coat of



white plaster to seal everything in.

For roofing, corn stalks, palm fonds and straws were used, allowing air to flow freely through the house. This method of roofing was known throughout the ABC islands (Aruba, Curacao, Bonaire), but the use of cornstalks in Aruba eventually got replaced with use of mud and white plaster for the roofs. The white plaster all around made the houses looks like cake, hence the name "Torto" (Spanish for "cake").



Building community

Building Torto houses was often a community effort. Young couples who were about to get married had to have their house built before they could tie the knot and start their own family. This is where the help of the community comes into play.

Neighbors, extended family and friends would all help in the construction of a Torto House. And everyone had a role: The men oversaw the building of the house, and the women were tasked with collecting wood and straws, cooking and taking care of the little ones.

The couple's family were primarily responsible for feeding everyone who helped build the house. Before construction, someone usually had the task to prepare the meal; going fishing or slaughter farm animals like goats, chicken or sheep. Even the older kids had their tasks; the older children of the family usually helped with collecting water and mixing the mud.

The average duration of construct-



ing a Cas di Torto was 4 months.

At the end of a long day of work, everyone would gather around and enjoy a feast of hearty food. This type of help from friends and family became a tradition and was called "paga lomba": You help me today; I'll help you tomorrow.

Nowadays, traditional Cas di Torto are rare, especially those that are still inhabited. Houses that do exist probably date back more than a century.

Picture credits: Aruba National Library (BNA) and the Monument-bureau archive on Coleccion. aw □

CROSSWORD

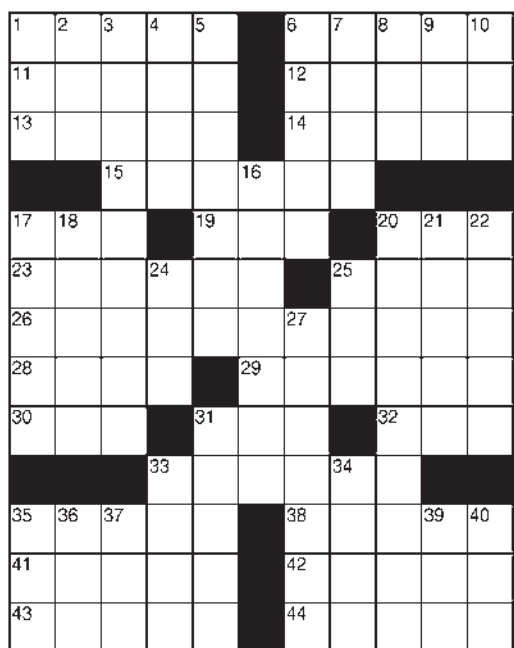
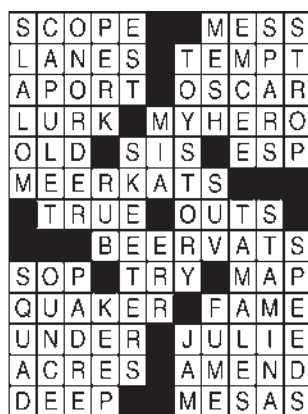
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Radius end
- 6 Football team
- 11 Feudal lord
- 12 Full of passion
- 13 Verdi work
- 14 Usher's spot
- 15 Make over
- 17 Snaky shape
- 19 "— been swell!"
- 20 Sis's sib
- 23 Genetic oddity
- 25 Horse halter
- 26 Okto-berfest locales
- 28 Do copy work
- 29 Unrefined
- 30 Bear's lair
- 31 Pi follower
- 32 Track act
- 33 Fume
- 35 Godzilla's home
- 38 Deceitful
- 41 Glorify
- 42 Skate-boarding jump
- 43 Campout sights
- 44 Fit for a king

DOWN

- 1 "Evil Woman"
- 2 Gloss band
- 3 Draft target
- 4 Storybook monster
- 5 Not staying in one's lane
- 6 Criticizes
- 7 Witty remark
- 8 Naval initials
- 9 Georgia airport code
- 10 Color
- 16 Embassy worker
- 17 Plant, in a way
- 18 Soft leather
- 20 Barfly's paunch
- 21 Free of suds
- 22 Start
- 24 Museum focus
- 25 Nutrition label abbr.
- 27 Cheer on
- 31 Signs a lease
- 33 Shaker stuff
- 34 Ring of light
- 35 Airport sight
- 36 Fire
- 37 Scathing review
- 39 "Chander-lier" singer
- 40 Snaky fish



1-26

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-26

CRYPTOQUOTE

GMD FWP'Q BYQ QMM ADFX

HLPQYT LP QXY HLPQYT.

— TMKYTQ UTMCC

Cryptoquote: A VACATION IS WHAT YOU TAKE WHEN YOU CAN NO LONGER TAKE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN TAKING. — EARL WILSON

Cruise ship Schedule: Jan. 13 - 18 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
TUE	13	CARNIVAL MAGIC	07.00	16.00	B	1
		CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE	08.00	23.00	C	1
		SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
WED	14	ROTTERDAM	08.00	17.00	B	1
		BRITANNIA	07.00	18.00	C	1
		OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1
THU	15	COSTA PACIFICA	07.00	22.00	B	1
		CARNIVAL VENEZIA	09.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	11.00	20.00	I	1
SAT	17	STAR PRIDE	06.00	16.00	B	1
		ZUIDERDAM	08.00	17.00	C	1
		AIDAPERLA	09.00	22.00	I	1
SUN	18	MARELLA DISCOVERY	08.00	20.00	B	1
		OCEANIA INSIGNIA	11.30	22.00	C	1
		FREEWINDS - Dept.	****	22.30	E	-

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



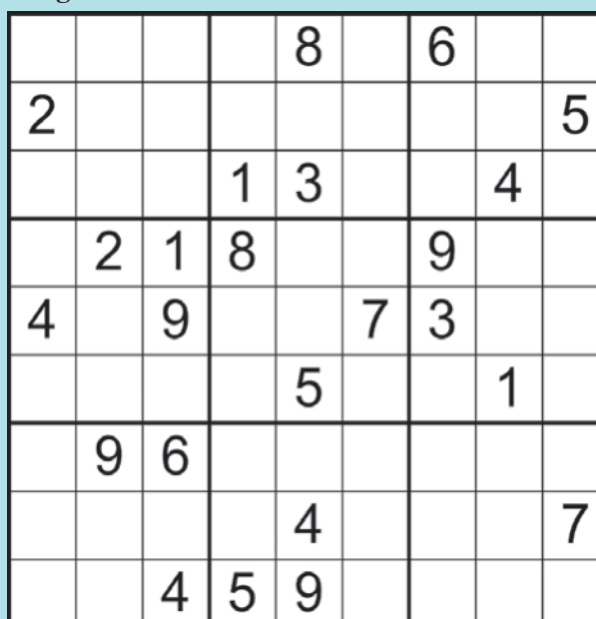
Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku



Difficulty: ★★★★★

1/16

Answer to previous puzzle

9	3	5	6	2	4	7	8	1
6	4	7	1	8	3	2	5	9
1	8	2	9	5	7	4	3	6
2	6	3	5	7	9	8	1	4
7	5	1	8	4	6	3	9	2
8	9	4	2	3	1	5	6	7
3	1	8	7	9	2	6	4	5
4	7	6	3	1	5	9	2	8
5	2	9	4	6	8	1	7	3

Difficulty: ★★★

1/15

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Ailing astronaut returns to Earth early in NASA's first medical evacuation

By **MARCIA DUNN**
AP Aerospace Writer
CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla.

(AP) — An ailing astronaut returned to Earth with three others on Thursday, ending their space station mission more than a month early in NASA's first medical evacuation.

SpaceX guided the capsule to a middle-of-the-night splashdown in the Pacific near San Diego, less than 11 hours after the astronauts exited the International Space Station. Their first stop was a hospital for an overnight stay.

"Obviously, we took this action (early return) because it was a serious medical condition," NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman said following splashdown. "The astronaut in question is fine right now, in good spirits and going through the proper medical checks."

It was an unexpected finish to a mission that began in August and left the orbiting lab with only one American and two Russians on board. NASA and SpaceX said they would try to move up the launch of a fresh crew of four; liftoff is currently targeted for mid-February.

NASA's Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke were joined on the return by Japan's Kimiya Yui and Russia's Oleg Platonov. Officials have refused to identify the astronaut who developed the health problem last week or explain what happened, citing medical privacy.

While the astronaut was stable in orbit, NASA wanted them back on Earth as soon as possible to receive proper care and diagnostic testing. The entry and splashdown required no special changes or accommodations, officials said, and the recovery ship had its usual allotment of medical experts on board. The astronauts emerged from the capsule, one by one, within an hour of splashdown. They were helped onto reclining cots and then whisked away for standard medical checks,



Roscosmos cosmonaut Oleg Platonov, left, NASA astronauts Mike Fincke, Zena Cardman, and JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) astronaut Kimiya Yui are seen inside the SpaceX Dragon Endeavour spacecraft onboard the SpaceX recovery ship SHANNON shortly after having landed in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Long Beach, Calif., Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026.

Associated Press

waving to the cameras. Isaacman monitored the action from Mission Control in Houston, along with the crew's families.

NASA decided a few days ago to take the entire crew straight to a San Diego-area hospital following splashdown and even practiced helicopter runs there from the recovery ship. The astronaut in question will receive in-depth medical checks before flying with the rest of the crew back to Houston on Friday, assuming everyone is well enough. Platonov's return to Moscow was unclear.

NASA stressed repeatedly over the past week that this was not an emergency. The astronaut fell sick or was injured on Jan. 7, prompting NASA to call off the next day's spacewalk by Cardman and Fincke, and ultimately resulting in the early return. It was the first time NASA cut short a spaceflight for medical reasons. The Russians had done so decades ago. Spacewalk preparations did not lead to the medical situation, Isaacman noted, but for anything else, "it would be very premature to draw any con-

clusions or close any doors at this point." It's unknown whether the same thing could have happened on Earth, he added. □



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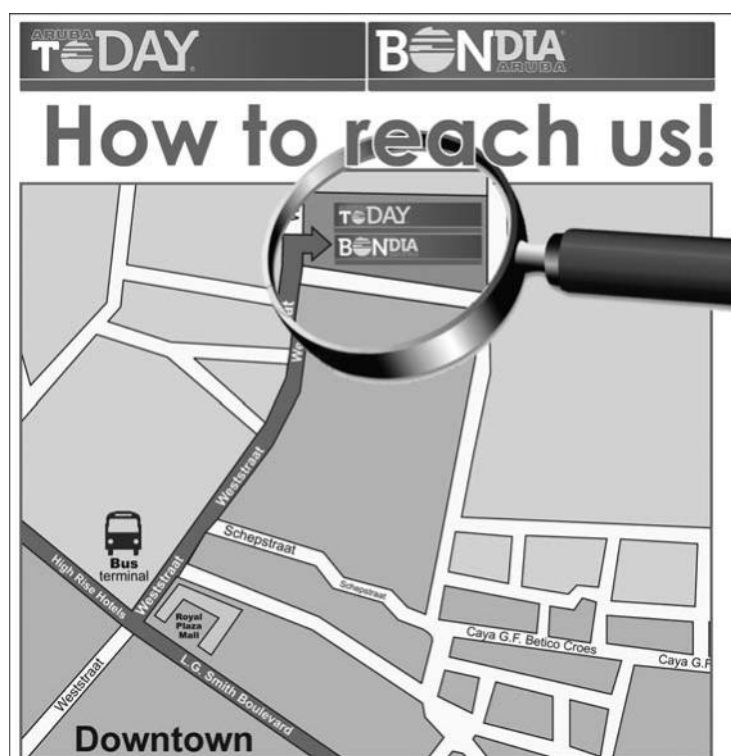
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Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
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Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
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Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia
Relacional Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433
Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Wikipedia inks AI deals with Microsoft, Meta and Perplexity as it marks 25th birthday

By **KELVIN CHAN**
AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Wikipedia unveiled new business deals with a slew of artificial intelligence companies on Thursday as it marked its 25th anniversary.

The online crowdsourced encyclopedia revealed that it has signed up AI companies including Amazon, Meta Platforms, Perplexity, Microsoft and France's Mistral AI.

Wikipedia is one of the last bastions of the early internet, but that original vision of a free online space has been clouded by the dominance of Big Tech platforms and the rise of generative AI chatbots trained on content scraped from the web.

Aggressive data collection methods by AI developers, including from Wikipedia's vast repository of free knowledge, has raised questions about who ultimately pays for the artificial intelligence boom.

The Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit that runs the site, signed Google as one of its first customers in 2022 and announced other agreements last year with smaller AI players like search engine Ecosia.

The new deals will help one of the world's most popular websites monetize heavy traffic from AI companies. They're paying to access Wikipedia content "at a volume and speed designed specifically for their needs," the foundation said. It did not provide financial or other details.

While AI training has sparked legal battles elsewhere over copyright and other issues, Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales said he welcomes it.

"I'm very happy personally that AI models are training on Wikipedia data because it's human curated," Wales told The Associated Press in an interview. "I wouldn't really want to use an AI that's trained only on X, you know, like a very angry AI," Wales said, referring to billionaire Elon Musk's social media platform.



Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia, speaks during an interview with The Associated Press on the occasion of Wikipedia's 25th anniversary in London, Monday, Jan. 12, 2026.

Associated Press

Wales said the site wants to work with AI companies, not block them. But "you should probably chip in and pay for your fair share of the cost that you're putting on us."

The Wikimedia Foundation last year urged AI developers to pay for access through its enterprise platform and said human traffic had fallen 8%. Meanwhile, visits from bots, sometimes disguised to evade detection, were heavily taxing its servers as they scrape masses of content to feed AI large language models. The findings highlighted shifting online trends as search engine AI overviews and chatbots summarize information instead of sending users to sites by showing them links.

Wikipedia is the ninth most visited site on the internet. It has more than 65 million articles in 300 languages that are edited by some 250,000 volunteers.

The site has become so popular in part because its free for anyone to use.

"But our infrastructure is not free, right?" Wikimedia Foundation CEO Maryana Iskander said in a separate interview in Johannesburg, South Africa.

It costs money to maintain

servers and other infrastructure that allows both individuals and tech companies to "draw data from Wikipedia," said Iskander, who's stepping down on Jan. 20, and will be replaced by Bernadette Meehan.

The bulk of Wikipedia's funding comes from 8 million donors, most of them individuals.

"They're not donating in order to subsidize these huge AI companies," Wales said. They're saying, "You know what, actually you can't just smash our website. You have to sort of come in the right way."

Editors and users could benefit from AI in other ways. The Wikimedia Foundation has outlined an AI strategy that Wales said could result in tools that reduce tedious work for editors.

While AI isn't good enough to write Wikipedia entries from scratch, it could, for example, be used to update dead links by scanning the surrounding text and then searching online to find other sources.

"We don't have that yet but that's the kind of thing that I think we will see in the future."

Artificial intelligence could also improve the Wikiped

ia search experience, by evolving from the traditional keyword method to more of a chatbot style, Wales said.

"You can imagine a world where you can ask the Wikipedia search box a question and it will quote to you from Wikipedia," he said. It could respond by saying "here's the answer to your question from this article and here's the actual paragraph. That sounds really useful to me and so I think we'll move in that direction as well."

Reflecting on the early days, Wales said it was a thrilling time because many people were motivated to help build Wikipedia after he and co-founder Larry Sanger, who departed long ago, set it up as an experiment.

However, while some might look back wistfully on what seems now to be a more innocent time, Wales said those early days of the internet also had a dark side. "People were pretty toxic back then as well. We didn't need algorithms to be mean to each other," he said. "But, you know, it was a time of great excitement and a real spirit of possibility."

Wikipedia has lately found

itself under fire from figures on the political right, who have dubbed the site "Wokepedia" and accused it of being biased in favor of the left.

Republican lawmakers in the U.S. Congress are investigating alleged "manipulation efforts" in Wikipedia's editing process that they said could inject bias and undermine neutral points of view on its platform and the AI systems that rely on it.

A notable source of criticism is Musk, who last year launched his own AI-powered rival, Grokkipedia. He has criticized Wikipedia for being filled with "propaganda" and urged people to stop donating to the site. Wales said he doesn't consider Grokkipedia a "real threat" to Wikipedia because it's based on large language models, which are the troves of online text that AI systems are trained on.

"Large language models aren't good enough to write really quality reference material. So a lot of it is just regurgitated Wikipedia," he said. "It often is quite rambling and sort of talks nonsense. And I think the more obscure topic you look into, the worse it is."

He stressed that he wasn't singling out criticism of Grokkipedia.

"It's just the way large language models work."

Wales say he's known Musk for years but they haven't been in touch since Grokkipedia launched.

"I should probably ping him," Wales said.

What would he say?

"'How's your family?' I'm a nice person, I don't really want to pick a fight with anybody.'" □



NCAA basketball players and gambling fixers are charged for allegedly rigging games

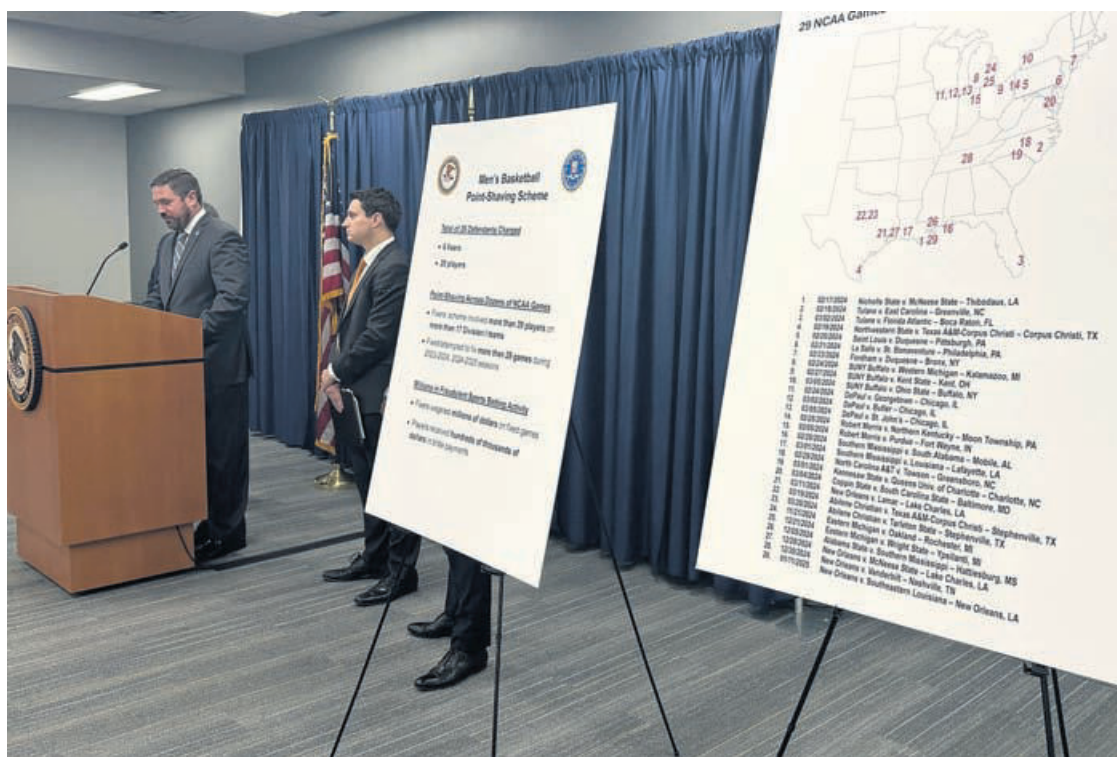
By MARC LEVY and
TASSANEE VEJPONGSA
Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — An investigation into a sprawling betting scheme to rig NCAA and Chinese Basketball Association games ensnared 26 people, including more than a dozen college basketball players who tried to fix games as recently as last season, federal prosecutors said Thursday.

The scheme generally revolved around fixers recruiting players with the promise of a big payment in exchange for purposefully underperforming during a game, prosecutors said. The fixers would then place big bets against the players' teams in those games, defrauding sportsbooks and other bettors, authorities said.

Calling it an "international criminal conspiracy," U.S. Attorney David Metcalf told reporters in Philadelphia that this case represents a "significant corruption of the integrity of sports." The indictment suggests that many others including unnamed players had a role in the scheme but weren't charged, and Metcalf said the investigation was continuing.

The varying charges against the 26 defendants, filed in federal court in Phil-



Information is displayed during a news conference to announce charges against 20 people including 15 former college basketball players, in what prosecutors called a betting scheme to rig NCAA and Chinese Basketball Association games, Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026 in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

adelphia, include bribery, wire fraud and conspiracy. Concerns about gambling and college sports have grown since 2018, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a federal ban on the practice, leading some states to legalize it to varying degrees.

According to the indictment unsealed Thursday, fixers started with two games in the Chinese Basketball Association in 2023 and, successful there, moved on to rigging NCAA

games as recently as January 2025.

The fixers' scheme grew to involve more than 39 players on more than 17 different NCAA Division I men's basketball teams, who then rigged and attempted to rig more than 29 games, prosecutors said.

They wagered millions of dollars, generating "substantial proceeds" for themselves, and paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to players in bribes, prosecutors said, with pay-

ments to players typically ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000 per game.

Prosecutors named more than 40 schools that were involved in games that were targeted by the scheme.

Rigged games included those played by teams in major conferences, such as Big East and Atlantic 10, prosecutors said.

Some were games against nationally ranked programs while some were playoff games, including

the first round of the Horizon League championship and the second round of the Southland Conference championship.

Some of the allegedly targeted teams were Tulane University, Buffalo State University, DePaul University, Robert Morris University, University of Southern Mississippi, Abilene Christian University, Eastern Michigan State University and the University of New Orleans.

Players often recruited teammates to cooperate by playing badly, sitting out or keeping the ball away from players who weren't in on the scheme to prevent them from scoring. Sometimes the attempted fix failed, meaning the fixers lost their bets.

To entice players, fixers would text photos of stacks of cash. In one case, a fixer encouraged a player to recruit a St. Louis University teammate by texting him one such photo: "send that to him if he bite he bite if he don't so be it lol," the indictment said.

Four of the players charged Simeon Cottle, Carlos Hart, Oumar Koureissi and Camian Shell played for their current teams in the last few days, although the allegations against them do not involve this season, but the 2023-24 season. □

Clayton Kershaw not quite done pitching, will play for U.S. in World Baseball Classic

CARY, N.C. (AP) — Clayton Kershaw isn't done pitching just yet, agreeing Thursday to join the U.S. team for this year's World Baseball Classic.

A left-hander who turns 38 two days after the March 17 championship game, Kershaw announced last September that he was retiring at the end of the season, his 18th in a stellar career for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

He won his third World Series title and finished 223-96 with a 2.53 ERA and 3,052 strikeouts.

The three-time NL Cy Young Award winner wanted to pitch for the Americans in the 2023 tournament but was prevented because of insurance issues at a time he had a \$20 million, one-year contract with the Dodgers.

Later Thursday, new Chicago Cubs third

baseman Alex Bregman announced he will join the U.S. team.

Kershaw joins a U.S. pitching staff that includes right-handers David Bednar, Clay Holmes, Griffin Jax, Nolan McLean, Mason Miller, Joe Ryan, Paul Skenes and Logan Webb along with left-handers Tarik Skubal and Gabe Speier.

The American roster also includes catchers Cal Raleigh and Will Smith; infielders Ernie Clement, Gunnar Henderson, Brice Turang and Bobby Witt Jr.; outfielders Byron Buxton, Corbin Carroll, Pete Crow-Armstrong and Aaron Judge; and designated hitter Kyle Schwarber.

The U.S., which lost the 2023 championship game to Japan, opens March 6 against Brazil at Houston, part of a group that also includes Brazil, Britain, Italy and Mexico. □



Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Clayton Kershaw celebrates the end of the top of the 12th inning against the Toronto Blue Jays in Game 3 of baseball's World Series, Monday, Oct. 27, 2025, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press



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It's 'gold or bust' for U.S. men's hockey at the Winter Olympics. The Americans are confident, too



United States' Jake Sanderson (85) is congratulated after his goal against Canada during the second period of the 4 Nations Face-Off championship hockey game, Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025, in Boston.

Associated Press

By STEPHEN WHYNO
AP Hockey Writer

Burned in Zach Werenski's memory is the first U.S. practice at the 4 Nations Face-Off last February. "You look around and see the skill," Werenski said. "I was like, 'This is fast.' It's wave after wave, player after player."

Over the summer, when the country's best gathered again for an orientation camp ahead of next month's Games in Milan, USA Hockey general manager Bill Guerin told them that nothing but gold would suffice. "I love it," winger Matt Boldy said. "You shouldn't be doing anything unless you're

trying to be the best at it." The U.S. has not won a so-called "best-on-best" international competition at the adult level in three decades dating to the 1996 World Cup of Hockey. It has not won men's gold at the Olympics since the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" team. The overflowing talent and the winning pedigree of the players going to Italy make Guerin's expectation as realistic as ever. "Everyone knows we have the team," top defenseman Quinn Hughes said. "I don't think anyone would be surprised if we won, so I think that that should be our goal. It's kind of gold or bust, just like it is for Canada." The U.S. lost to Canada in the final at 4 Nations, in the semi-finals at the 2014 Olympics in Sochi and in the gold medal game at the 2010 Games in Vancouver. The neighbor to the north is set to have four of the best players in the world

on its roster with Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar and two-time Olympic champion Sidney Crosby together for the first time. American talent adds up, too, from a stacked blue line led by Hughes, Werenski, Charlie McAvoy and Jacob Slavin and a forward corps featuring Jack Eichel, Auston Matthews and brothers Matthew and Brady Tkachuk to elite goaltenders Connor Hellebuyck and Jake Oettinger. NHL standouts Dylan Larkin and Jack Hughes are expected to be depth contributors. "It's not just having a good team on paper," Guerin said. "It's actually getting it done." The U.S. has gotten it done at other levels for many years now, winning four of the past eight world junior championships (for players under age 20) and a handful of under-18 titles over the past decade-plus.

"It starts at that age," defenseman Noah Hanifin said. "The younger generation, you start to see it kind of develop and grow, and I think winning those tournaments is really showing how many strides USA Hockey has taken." Strides in coaching have also helped. Two-time Stanley Cup-winning coach Mike Sullivan is back in charge after being behind the bench at 4 Nations, when his team showed flashes of dominance and came one goal away from winning it all. Werenski, who last spring helped the U.S. win the world championship for the first time since 1933, knows it would be foolish to overlook teams like Czechia, Switzerland, Slovakia and Germany. But he agrees with Guerin that such a strong showing in games against Canada, Sweden and Finland in a meaningful tournament will carry over to Milan. □